

## The Yellowstone Workforce

The United States has changed in many ways since Horace Albright advertised for park rangers by asking for “Big Men with Fine Personalities.” These days, government agencies are expected to reflect the nation’s diversity, and Yellowstone’s desire to achieve more diversity among its workforce is motivated not only by the force of anti-discrimination laws, but by a belief that employees of varied backgrounds can better address the needs and interests of a variety of visitors. Yet ideally Yellowstone employees will embody not only the range of visitors who visit the park in person, but all Americans whom Yellowstone has the potential to reach in any form—on the ground, in print, through cyberspace.



### WANTED: BIG MEN WITH FINE PERSONALITIES

*... “a ranger can be sure of 75 days employment... The pay is \$100.00 per month... The successful applicant must... furnish his own clothes... He must bring his own bed...*

*We want men who are mature in appearance. We prefer men of 25 to 30 years of age... The ranger is primarily a policeman, therefore he should be big in frame... We always prefer big men... If you are small of stature, better not apply.*

*The ranger must be... tactful, diplomatic, and courteous; he must be patient. If you are not possessed of such characteristics, please don't apply...*

*We want big men with fine personalities, and experience in the out-of-doors in riding, camping, woodcraft, fighting fires, and similar activities.... Rangers must rise at 6:00 a.m... and must retire not later than 11:00 p.m.... [he] may even be called from his bed for emergency service... he is not paid for services rendered in excess of an 8-hour period.*

*Remember there is no vacation in the work, and mighty little money... ”*

— From a 1926 letter to applicants from Horace M. Albright, Yellowstone Superintendent

## THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE SCENERY



Park visitors often associate park employees with the “Smokey Bear” hat and regard all uniformed personnel as “rangers.” But during the peak summer season, Yellowstone’s staff also includes more than 300 maintenance employees—engineers, landscape architects, mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters, heavy equipment operators, water and sewage treatment plant operators, supervisors, and general laborers. These men and women paint, wire, and repair park buildings. They keep the lights on. They fill the potholes, clear the culverts, repair the trails and sidewalks, pick up the trash, clean the toilets, and are responsible for a vast array of vital but largely behind-the-scenes “dirty work.”

Other behind-the-scenes staff keep the park’s communications systems working and the necessary supplies coming in. They lead, cajole, and in some cases, drag the park into the 21st century of geographic information systems and electronic information transfer. In what some consider the real information hub of the park—the mail room—employees are kept busy making copies, transmitting faxes, and distributing the mail to and from park offices. Administrative staff process the paperwork needed for an employee to get a job, a performance evaluation, and a paycheck.

Their contributions may not seem as glamorous as tracking wolves or digging up archeological sites, but they are the ones to call when the plumbing backs up, the heating system breaks down, or the computer won’t work. The support staff—and the facilities, supplies, and equipment they maintain—make it possible for the rest of the staff to explore, study, protect, and serve the visitors and resources of Yellowstone.

## WHO’S MINDING THE PARK

The NPS uniform is now worn by both male and female employees representing a broader range of ages, ethnicity, beliefs, academic backgrounds, and professions than in Horace Albright’s day. “Rangers,” the most familiar of national park employees, now usually have specialized training in a particular field such as visitor protection, interpretation, or natural or cultural resource management. The park’s maintenance employees, who frequently work in public view wearing the NPS gray and green, often find themselves answering visitor questions and providing front-line assistance. Other employees are responsible for planning, public affairs, concessions management, computer support, and other administrative functions.

**A too-uniform park staff.** Yet despite the broad range of skills needed of a national park staff, and the abundance of women now to be seen in the NPS gray and green, employees at Yellowstone and many other parks cannot be said to represent a broad spectrum of racial or cultural origins. Yellowstone has few minority employees with permanent status in any job category or division, and none in upper level management jobs. Only in the last five years has there been a female division chief or assistant in a position other than those commonly held by women. Yellowstone's first female chief of interpretation was hired in 1998, joining two female and four male division chiefs; the park's senior positions are still occupied by white males in proportions far larger than can be found in the U.S. workforce in general or the NPS in particular. Voluntary self-reporting by 375 employees at Yellowstone indicates that 62 percent are white males, 35 percent white females, and only 3 percent minorities of either sex.

With an adequate supply of job applicants usually eager to work at Yellowstone in most occupational fields, until recently the park's efforts to recruit candidates of any type have been limited. However, in 1998 several park employees made recruiting trips to selected colleges which have a large percentage of minority students. In order to encourage the hiring of minority candidates, the NPS can waive the customary job posting and competitive application process for entry level positions. As a result of these recruitment trips and other efforts, Yellowstone did increase the number of females and minorities hired for the 1998 and 1999 summer seasons.

**Mapping out a career track.** The NPS made great strides in increasing the number and training of professional staff in several important areas during the 1980s. More than 200 natural resource management specialists participated in a service-wide training program, some of whom trained in or accepted permanent jobs at Yellowstone. A proposed parallel cultural resource training program never materialized, but Yellowstone has added three specialists to this branch since 1989. Another service-wide initiative, the Ranger Careers program, boosted the average grade of NPS rangers in protection and interpretation across the nation from GS-5 (\$21,800 annual starting salary in 1999) to GS-9 (\$32,000). Other career programs designed to increase the professionalism of the NPS workforce include Resource Careers, Administration Careers, and an Intake Program. A minority trainee from New York City participating in the Intake Program with a specialization in computers has been at Yellowstone since August 1998.

**Volunteers in parks.** Like many national parks, Yellowstone has increasingly come to rely on the assistance of volunteers to help fill the gaps in its own workforce and budget. During 1998 at Yellowstone, 294 people contributed a total of 55,800 hours of volunteer work. This included answering visitors' questions at information desks, serving as campground hosts, and collecting and analyzing data for resource managers and researchers.

Unfortunately, the park must turn away more than 2,000 offers of assistance each year, primarily because of the lack of housing and support funds. Although many potential volunteers are prepared to live in their own travel trailers or recreational vehicles, the park does not have trailer pads to accommodate them. In addition to housing, the park also tries to provide a small daily stipend to help pay for food, but only \$10,000 was available for this purpose in 1999.

### *Program Needs*

- **IMPROVE WORKFORCE DIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONALISM.** The goal of increasing the number of minority employees in permanent positions at Yellowstone requires a commitment to diversity that can only be achieved when senior managers are willing to devote time to this issue. Based on the recruiters' experience, Yellowstone needs to target potential candidates and select interns from diverse populations, educate them about the NPS and Yellowstone's resources and mission, and improve the support system—including transportation, recreational opportunities, and mentoring—so that new hires feel welcome in the park. A recurring budget for supplies and travel would bolster the fledgling recruitment program aimed at increasing workforce diversity. Funding is also needed to provide continuing education and training for Yellowstone's long-term career professionals.
- **INCREASE VOLUNTEER SUPPORT.** To make better use of the available volunteer assistance, the park needs additional employees to oversee volunteer workers, and housing and funds to cover their basic living expenses.



## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### STEWARDSHIP GOALS



Yellowstone's employee population reflects the overall diversity of the civilian labor force.



Yellowstone has enough professionally trained staff to fulfill the park's mission: to conserve the park's resources unimpaired for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.



Volunteers with a variety of talents and skills have the opportunity to make a valuable contribution to Yellowstone in assisting visitors and protecting resources.

### CURRENT STATE OF RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



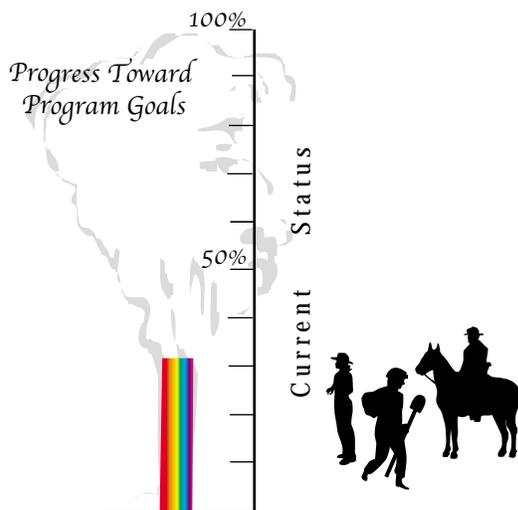
Yellowstone is working to recruit a greater diversity of job applicants, but the diversity of its staff remains well below that of the U.S. population.



Park staff often fail to meet acceptable standards for visitor service and resource protection because of heavy work loads and limitations in training, equipment, and other support; progress has been made in professionalizing the ranger workforce, but other career programs have been hindered by lack of funding.



Volunteers make an important contribution to park programs, but many skilled applicants must be turned away because of insufficient infrastructure and supervisory support.



### 1998 FUNDING AND STAFF

Recurring Funds	
Yellowstone N.P. Base Budget	\$ 10,000
Non-Recurring Funds	
One-time Projects	\$ 11,000
Staff	1.5 FTE

The human resources and funding necessary to professionally and effectively manage the park to stewardship levels will be identified in the park business plan.